

29er Online

29 Inch Mountain Bike Reviews



Saturday, October 9, 2010

Bob Builds Bikes. Questions Our Readers Are Asking.

Posted by FatBob on September 21, 2010

Bob Builds Bikes. Questions Our Readers Are Asking.

For a few months we have been allowing our readers to ask us questions on buying advice for 29ers. I wanted to post a few up with some answers that may be helpful to our readers. Periodically I will post some of the questions. Names addresses, countries etc will be kept private .

I do want to thank the people that asked these questions. There are many great questions.

The first question is from Dom. Dom is 6'5" tall and 192 LBS from Los Angeles California. At the time of the build or bike request he was riding 1997 Gary Fisher Kaitai. Here is what he say's about his riding style. " I love to climb, but most of my riding these days is at Mammoth going downhill. Big hucks are not my thing. Singletrack is what I'm after"

Here is my suggestion.

Dom! What's up!. Sorry for the late response. Mammoth mountain Singletrack, and loves to climb? It seems like you want a do it all bike. If you love to climb but need something confident and secure on DH I would lean you towards something with some longer legs but that pedals well. In this application the first bike that comes to my mind is the Specialized Stumpjumper 2010 and 2011. It is light for the travel range and the BRAIN will let you tune the shock for all day climbs or soft enough for tearing up a decent. Bang for the buck it is really hard to beat it. The head angle is nice and slack and if I ever get my little Specialized video up you will see that our testers thought the slack angle never prevented them from climbing well.

Other bikes to check out: The Inrense Tracer 29. We are testing it now. It pedals surprisingly well. The geometry is really playful. I cant in good conscience tell you at this point any more as I am still in the honey moon phase with this bike.

The RIP9 from Niner would be a good choice. It is really hard not to recommend this frame to almost every build request. It does everything well. The head angle tends to be a little steep for the steepest sections of trail. Compared to a 26er you will be floored at its over all ability. Please feel free to ask questions. Also parts play a big role in the capacity of these bikes especially changing forks as it has the potential to raise or lower the bottom bracket and slacken or steepen a head angle. Good designers are really capitalizing on this.

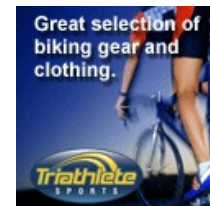
FatBob

Dom responded: "Thanks for the input. The Stumpjumper was exactly where I was settling. Although, I was looking at the hardtail version. I ride the smooth stuff down, so I'm guessing the extra being from the bigger tires will be enough. Thoughts?"

Answer: Hey Dom, I would still go dual suspension. The Pneumatic suspension a tire gives is a far cry from what actual suspension does.

These are my observations.

I have run softer tires but when I do I tend to burp them way to often(I run tubeless). Secondly and more of a problem is, I use the suspension to act as a spring to lift my front end into the air. Also to launch me air born off jumps. When a tire has low pressure it squirms and is unpredictable. This



Categories

[Announcements](#)[Community](#)[Fails](#)[Fork Reviews](#)[Frame Reviews](#)[Other Stuff We Like](#)[Perspective](#)[Tire Reviews](#)[Tires](#)[Uncategorized](#)[Why 29ers?](#)

Send Us Beer Money

Like what we've got going on here?

Send the guys at 29er Online; yes that's us ;) some beer money to let us know.



Help Us Help You

Our goal in creating this site is to provide honest reviews on big wheel mountain bikes (29ers to be exact) while stating up front our prejudices.

To do this better we need your help!

So please don't hesitate to offer your opinions on our current reviews by leaving a comment or [tell us what you would like to see reviewed](#) or why you appreciated / didn't appreciate something we have already reviewed.

Search for:

Search

Recent Comments

matthew on Parts That Fail by Donn O

matthew on Manitou Minute 2 First Impressions

FatBob on Marzocchi's New 29er Fork: 140mm 29er fork.

carter1 on Marzocchi's New 29er Fork: 140mm 29er fork.

Mel on Niner R.I.P. 9 Long Term Test: By Donn O

Other Sites

[NC Bike Shop](#)

[Schwalbe Tires 25% OFF](#)


Every Schwalbe Bicycle Tire Large Selection - Free Coupon
www.EveryBicycleTire.com/Schwa



is also a problem in tighter leaning turns. I run my tubeless tires at about 32-35 PSI. Even at that air pressure I still get cushion but not even near enough to call it close to a suspension bike(even a 4" suspension bike). I would highly recommend the Specialized Stumpjumper FSR with the BRAIN, who knows you may even decide to hit some of the more tech lines on the way down!

 SHARE

[Translate]

 Like  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Bob Builds Bikes. Questions Our Readers Are Asking.](#)

Comments: [Be the First to Comment](#)

Filed Under: [Perspective](#)

29er Review: Intense Tracer 29

Posted by FatBob on August 17, 2010

[29er Review: Intense Tracer 29](#)

This is the starting point of 29eronline's review of the [Intense Tracer 29er](#).

We wrote a report from Sea Otter about who and what the Tracer 29er was about [here](#).



In our usual fashion we start by building the frame. Below are some pictures of the Intense. One of the first things I noticed was how awesome the craftsmanship is. This bike has many years of experience built into every dime of weld! I have zero fault with the Intense. You will not find sloppy workmanship on these bikes.



[Intense](#) hand builds the Tracer 29er in California USA. All the design is done in house. TheVPP suspension technology is licensed from Santa Cruz bikes who bought the patent from a company Outland Bikes that went belly up in early 2000(I don't have the exact date) I wanted an Outland really bad and have been a long time believer in the suspension design. The problem

We want to be your main source for information on the mountain bikes you are looking for.

Our Sponsors



Advertisements



with the Outland design was durability. I saw a bunch with seat tubes just above the bottom Bracket cracked. Intense has opted to use a top tube mounted swing link instead of the original walking beam that Outland employed. Needless to say I am super exited about this bike!



How did it build up? Almost perfect. The Bottom Bracket literally threaded in all the way by hand. No tools necessary. The threads gave a little resistance but no binding or catching. Smooth and even all the way to the last thread. Perfect!



The seat tube is a tight 31.6 mm. It is tight but there are no burs. Tight is good. This means there is no play between the seat post and the internal part of the seat tube. But not so tight to mark up the seat posts finish.

Reamed to perfection.

The cable routing makes sense. Not my favorite type but was easy enough to figure out without looking online at other people's work. Thank you for not doing goofy under the down tube and bottom bracket shell.

Intense knows that a 5.5 inch travel 29er needs cable guides for a remote dropping seat post. They are nicely tucked under the top tube and shock.



The front d railleur is a top pull, direct mount. This was the hardest cable to run. It really wasn't bad. I just had to think a little bit and it made sense after

looking at it for a minute or two.

We opted for a 135mm spaced rear G2 drop out. If you are building up an Intense Tracer 29er from the ground up I would opt for the 142mm option that is also available. If you already own a wheel set, check with the maker as many hubs are convertible relatively cheaply. There is always going to be a debate when we see new standards. Some people are not happy about the 142mm x 12mm drop out. I like it and have from the first time I saw the drawings on the Syntace website. If you have used the 15qr system that Fox uses then you are already familiar with the 142x12 set up. It really is easy to use and as an added bonus should help stiffen the rear end of your bike if your bike was designed well. I foresee a 142mm rear conversion on the Tracer 29ers future, along with a 140mm fork.



The Headset caused me some head ache and a few days. How hard is it to take an order, then send the correct head set? This cost a couple of days. This is no fault of Intense.

The Intense is speced with a 1.5 head tube. I really wish, after working with this, other company's would adopt this set up. You can run any steer tube on the market by simply changing parts or all of the headset. It adds alot of weld surface and stiffens the front end if executed properly. Cane Creek even makes a headset that allows you to change the head angle.



29eronline opted to use a external bearing lower and a direct set upper. I am not a fan of super low front ends and don't feel as a taller rider a low stack height is a big deal. I end up putting an inch of spacers and running a low rise bar. On the Tracer so far I am wishing for an even higher front end. this is Easy to remedy, just use a higher rise bar.

So credit should be given to Intense for the 1.5 head tube. The ability to swap bearings will allow for a creak free front end for many years and it is of course cheaper to replace a headset cup and bearing then throwing

away a front triangle if a creak should develop on a integrated head set type frame.

Unfortunately the newness of the Tracer 29er Model and reducer top bearing caused a build delay as Storm Endurance could not get the parts from a distributor. They orders the parts direct from Cane Creek then then sent the wrong crown race(a reducer instead of a 1.5). It was of course not the end of the world but delayed the process. Make sure you have part numbers and model names on your own before you order the parts.



I really like to ride the bike for a week or two before I post the build report. In the web age the reader is used to instant everything. 29eronline has stepped back from the temptation to compete to make sure we are working on our quality.

I have ridden the bike for a couple of weeks and have started getting testers some time on it. I have not had a single tester not walk away impressed with this bike. It is plush even with the sub par Fox RP23 shock(universal on most bikes we are testing not unique to Intense)



Plenty of clearance.

It does almost everything to my very high expectation of this bike. It is easy to control. Confident on steep trails, takes small, medium and big hits with no hesitation. Corners awesome and is well mannered at walking pace and on slow tech maneuvers....so far. We need time to really put it through the paces.

Things I had to work out: First is set up. Figuring out sag. There is no set up data base on the Intense website. I am finding the sweet spot to be 25% sag. 30% seems good also and with a 140mm fork there would be plenty of ground clearance. 20% was not good. The bike rode harsh and lost compliance. take time to set the bike up correctly. There is no magic body weight ratio. you have to take a percentage of the stroke and add or subtract air until you hit the sweet spot. I find it is easiest to start at about 3/4 of your body weight and go up from there. Also if letting air out undershoot and re pump up. Don't trust the pump when you let air out.

I am also having an issue with one pivot loosening up on me. [Intense](#) is staying in touch as I try a couple of things on my end. I am confident it will be remedied.

Second Issue: We run DT-Swiss RWS skewers. The RWS skewers will not clear the dérailleur without first removing the nut and pulling the skewer. One more reason to get the 142mm option.

In short the [Intense Tracer29](#) has been a blast to ride. There are a couple of kinks but the craftsmanship has overall been beautiful. As we ride more

we will be in tune to it's strengths and weakness. In our usual style we will be changing parts as we go to see how versatile this frame is.



7 LBS 13 OZ



[+](#) SHARE [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) ...

[Translate]

[Like](#) [f](#) Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[29er Review: Intense Tracer 29](#)

Comments: [Be the First to Comment](#)

Filed Under: [Frame Reviews](#)

Tire Test: Geax Barro Race 29er TNT Casing by D.O.

Posted by FatBob on July 28, 2010

[Tire Test: Geax Barro Race 29er TNT Casing by D.O.](#)

Fat Bob called me up and said he had some cool race tires for me to test – I have been bugging him for some go fast stuff so I could gain an advantage over my riding buddies.

At first glance the Barro's look very fast with very short low rolling resistance knobs and a stiff sidewall.

My Racing Ralf's are starting to wear down some and they are so light that the side walls love to weep air unless you keep plenty of fresh Stan's in them so the new Geax Barro Race tires and there super tuff looking sidewalls peaked my interest.

I should have been suspicious when Fat Bob mentioned that these tires might be a little tuff to mount and to make sure that I had some tire tools. I quickly found out what a under statement that was - impossible to mount would be more like it.



The Ralf's came off without tools but the Geax tires seemed just too small and the fight was on. I could not get even the first bead to go on my Stan's no tube rim – what the hell is up with these tires – they had 29 printed in big numbers right on the sidewall but they refused to mount.

After bending the crap out of every tire tool I had I finally got the first side to bead on the rim and guess what, the inside of the tire was very tight fitting even in the center of the rim. So after I started beading the second side and inserted the proper dose of Stan's sealant I hit a brick wall no way was the tire going on. I then recruited my super strong son that would just love to show up the old man – it did not take to long for this tire to whip him too. His comment I better order a 29 1/2" tire this one is too small and I agreed.

I faced a real dilemma I had a week of riding planned and a tire that won't go on. I had a good 10 inches of bead left and 3/4" overlap with an almost zero stretch side wall. I tried several side wall lubricants (soap / alcohol / water) to add some slip but no luck. My thoughts cure it or kill it – its not my tire it's Fat Bobs – is he playing a trick on me? After searching my garage I settled on a well worn 12" Craftsman flat blade screwdriver. I finally had enough leverage - either this tire is going to rip or the rim is going to bend but it is going on and it did along with some new scratches on my high dollar rim. Well a tire that tight should bead up real easy right?

Well it would if you could get the air to go in but the tire was so tight on the center of the rim that it is blocking off the back side of the presta valve– no air would go in even though I pumped 140 psi. I finally pulled hard on the sidewalls while holding an air chuck and got the tire to pump up.



Note the side wall in relation to the valve stem.

A simple tire change had turned into an all afternoon ordeal. Fat Bob then tells me the tire was not compatible with my rim – no sh_t / then he said the tire needs UST rim. I never attempted putting the second tire on the rear.

Test Setup:

Front tire – Geax Barro Race 2.0 – rear tire Schwalbe Racing Ralf 2.25

Test bike:

Niner RIP 9

Test results:

At different NC trails

White Water trail in Charlotte A+ dry very hard pack clay

Warriors Creek Wilkesboro /A+ machine cut smooth hard pack clay

Wild Turkey Greensboro /A- hard pack clay with a little loose sand

DuPont State Forest / A+ on the granite stuff, B+ on the hard pack trails

Governors Creek / A- dry hard pack clay some sand and pine needles

Harris Lake / B hard pack clay with pine needles and roots

Jonesboro Fault Trail Sanford / C- not recommended crashed twice both times on fast sweeping turns with loose gravel

Comments:

This tire is narrow the sidewalls are stiff and the tread has very shallow knobs with wide spacing - that is why it has such low rolling resistance which makes it fast on specific hard surfaces – Granite & brick hard clay trails.



Add a little sand and you start drifting in your turns. Where this tire doesn't work is cornering on gravel there is so much round rubber between the shallow knobs that little pieces of rock act like ball bearings and will roll the tire right out from under you – I got plenty of scrapes and bruises to show from using this tire on loose trail surfaces. After my crashes I was very reluctant to push the limits with this tire unless the surface was clean and hard.



I had no issues with straight line braking and you just don't grab a hand full of front brakes in a turn especially with these tires.

Conclusions:

If you race on granite or dry hard pack clay trails this tire screams. If you ride on loose stuff you will need a tire with more tread on it.

I have some sixer UST rims in my garage and the rim channel is much deeper than my Stan's ZTR 355 29er rims so I suspect these tires will mount with less hassle on a UST specific rim.



[Translate]



Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Tire Test: Geax Barro Race 29er TNT Casing by D.O.](#)

Comments: [3 Comments to Read](#)

Filed Under: [Tire Reviews](#)

Tire Test Geax Barro Race 29er Tires

Posted by FatBob on July 26, 2010

Tire Test Geax Barro Race 29er Tires

Summer is here in full swing. With 100 degree weather comes different riding conditions then our wet cold winters. So I started calling a couple of companies I have been meaning to call for a while to see about getting some tires to test.

If you have been reading 29eronline you may have noticed we are proponents of tubeless technology. We have risked and lost some blood in the process of testing some tires as tubeless even though the tire was not rated as a tubeless tire. So I was really hoping to find tubeless rated tires.



Then came a company I have been eying for a while named Geax. Geax has introduced a UST compatible Tire dubbed TNT(Tube No Tube). Due to the dryer faster conditions Geax sent us some of their Barro race tires.

First I want to introduce the company. Geax is pronounced jee-acks as Ryan DeLong, Geax marketing manager explained. I like to write out the pronunciation as Gee-axe. Geax is a division of Vittoria who is known for the manufacture of road tires. I sold Vittoria tires and have had good results with the quality. I also realize that the technology does not always transfer over between sports so a test was due.

Here are some vitals. 29 x 2.0, 680 grams made for speed and to be run tubeless using sealant(Geax makes their own) on UST rims like the ones Mavic Fulcrum and Easton have available.




These do not fit on Stans rims. Seriously, don't try it. You will read Donn O's article and find out why. Geax does make a non TNT casing which should fit fine on Stan's or any other rim.

So next up I will post Donn's write up.

 **SHARE**    ...

[Translate]

 **Like**  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Tire Test Geax Barro Race 29er Tires](#)

Comments: [Be the First to Comment](#)

Filed Under: [Tires](#)

Titus Rockstar Review: Intro and Build Report.

Posted by FatBob on July 3, 2010

[Titus Rockstar Review: Intro and Build Report.](#)

29eronline received a [Titus Rockstar](#). We did a write up on it [here](#). What is the Titus Rockstar? It is an Aluminium front triangle mated to a carbon fiber rear triangle. It has 4 inches of travel front and rear. Titus bikes allows the use of a 120mm travel fork but it is designed to use with a 4' fork. [here](#) is a link to the geometry chart. If you decide to buy the titanium version of this bike custom geometry is available.



What is the Titus Rockstar made for? It is designed as a trail bike that can be taken anywhere you want to go. How is it different then any other bike we have tested like the Niner RIP9 , Specialized Stumpjumper, Pivot Mach 429 or any other bike we have ridden up to date? We don't know yet. So this is where we start our review.

How did the Titus do in our build process? This is a very impressive part to me. It is so simple. I understand that alot went into the building of and designing of this bike. It takes alot to build a bike that performs high tech but is simple at the same time. The cable routing is simple. Under the top tube. When I ran the cables I kept thinking I missed something....it was so easy.

Tuning the top pull traditional([top swing](#)) front derailier was a fast and simple experience. The rear derailier has no weird kinks in the cable routing. The rear derailier does sit close to the Horst link drop out but does not really

make a difference when setting the limit screws. Again easy.



The RockStar uses a 30.9 seat tube. This allows the use of most popular dropping seat posts.

The headset was not the normal 1 1/8 standard. You need to get a 1.5 inch lower and a 44mm inset top bearing in 1 1/8 sizing. This was easy to get even at Storm Endurance Sports our local small Independent bike shop.



The frame weighed a modest 6 Lbs 4 oz and our complete SLX mix kit had the bike weighing 28 LBS 10 oz.



The rest of the build was uneventful for the most part. There were only two things I can ding the Titus for.



First is a real issue. The Bottom Bracket shell was threaded poorly. It took a lot of effort. If I was impatient I would have cross threaded my bottom bracket bearing cup. I am pretty sure that after this is read by Titus poorly threaded bottom bracket shells will no longer be an issue.



Second problem I found is relatively minor. Where the swing link is, the cables flair out towards the rider when pedaling. I am not really sure how this could be solved. Maybe just by putting the cable guides closer together?

So those are the only negatives....really that's all I have. Pretty minor in my opinion since the bottom bracket can easily be fixed at the factory before shipping.



Titus bikes has been really easy to work with, they always answer the phone or call back in a timely fashion, which is very encouraging.

How does it ride. I can't comment much as we are riding it with a 120mm fork until our Fox TALAS 29er fork comes in. Since the Rockstar is built around a 100mm fork it would be unfair to make any comments until we spend a good amount of time with the properly spec'd fork.



plenty of room for large tires!

What I can say is it feels like quality. No flimsy feeling bike here! The front is stout but never feels harsh The rear end is plenty stiff but has a pleasantly damp feel to it. I have a feeling I will be crying for a large volume air shock so the begging may commence shortly.

I would say I am pleasantly surprised but I am really not. It is funny that some company's I don't expect a lot from. With the Titus I expected a lot and am not disappointed.

 **SHARE**    

[Translate]

 **Like**  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Titus Rockstar Review: Intro and Build Report.](#)

Comments: [7 Comments to Read](#)

Filed Under: [Frame Reviews](#)

Build Tips For a 29er Trail Bike Part Two

Posted by FatBob on June 15, 2010

[Build Tips For a 29er Trail Bike Part Two](#)

This is a continuation of the trail bike build suggestions in answer to Steve. Steve submitted a build request to "Bob Builds Bikes". I thought it would be helpful to post my answer to the world as I am sure many people wonder about this kind of thing.

What should we talk about next? I think the next subject should be wheels and brakes.

First let's discuss brakes. 29eronline specs Shimano SLX brakes on the test rigs. I have been a long time supporter of [Shimano Brakes](#). My affection started out with Shimano four piston XT brakes that came out in about the year 2000. They have since improved the design of course.

Why I like Shimano? They are easy to bleed. They use [mineral oil](#), which is pretty harmless stuff if it gets on you or on your bike. This is as opposed to [DOT fluid](#) which can burn your skin, ruin the finish on your bike and is environmentally not good. Shimano brakes offer plenty of power and excellent modulation. They are easy to align when you install them. Last but not least they are pretty affordable and easy to get parts for. I would say if

you are traveling, almost any bike shop will have [brake pads](#) and be able to service these brakes.

The cons? They are heavy. That is the only con I can think of.

I have a set of [Formula R1](#) brakes and have ridden [Magura Marta SL](#) brakes for a couple of years. Both of these brakes perform well. They are both light. They are both very expensive. They are both more expensive to maintain. The Formula R1 brakes will be harder to find parts for. I recently snapped a bolt in the Formula R1 brake levers. I had to send the whole brake back to Formula to get a new master cylinder. Formula had excellent customer service and fortunately had what I needed to fix my brakes. The retail of this would be well over \$130. For that much money I could buy a complete Shimano brake set! Needless to say I went to the hardware store and bought 4 steel bolts and replaced the pretty anodized red ones that were sent with the brakes. The Marta Brakes are excellent feeling and I really like them. I did snap one of the carbon levers. If this ever happens to you read the directions on how to change the levers. I did not. Evidently doing it wrong can screw up the brake. Again the cost of the brake lever assembly cost about what an SLX brake set(front or rear) can be bought for online. Plus this was a special order item. It took a week to fix.

Long story short. The high end brakes work well but are harder to service unless you go to a well equipped shop that keeps the small parts in stock. It is also debatable that they work better then Shimano brakes that cost half the amount. If you don't mind a little bit of pork the Shimano's are hard to beat. I don't have much to say about [Avid](#) except I have little experience with them. I have had a couple of warranty items from them recently and I finally gave up trying to get the warranty's taken care of. I am not sure if Shimano is any better which is another topic all together.

As far as [rotors](#) go. We use 180mm Front and 160mm in the rear. If I had to do it over I would do 180mm front and rear. This seems to be plenty of rotor for XC and trail use in most locations I have been in. I went through a 200mm rotor phase but feel it is really overkill for most riders needs. Take it for what it is, just an opinion.

Wheels: This topic is huge! I can not possibly cover it all. I guess we can talk about custom hand built and pre-built. A pre built wheel to me is a wheel set that has been factory built as a dedicated wheelset. Typically they require special proprietary parts. The problem with these types of wheels is that typically it is harder to get them serviced. The parts usually have to be ordered directly through the company. The spoke gauge and strength is picked for a "standard" weight range and a dedicated purpose. This is where type casting riders comes in. Do you ride all mountain? Cross country? Enduro? Freeride? Light freeride"? Aggressive all mountain? Light all mountain? Aggressive trail? Down Hill? Who Knows! I guess all of us ride trail. So trail bike it is.

Typically I use the marketing type casting to pair a wheel set to a rider weight and riding style. If you have a 250 LBS rider that likes to jump every indentation in the trail or lives for rock gardens stay away from wheels that advertise light. This is where "all mountain" wheels come into play. If the 250 LBS rider loves rock gardens and brags about all the parts he breaks then this is where a custom wheel set comes onto play.

Alternatively if I hear of a light rider that wants a wheelset that can handle "trail riding" and admits to being a little timid I want him on a fairly light wheelset. Donn O is about 150LBS. He runs Stans 355 rims, light spokes, alloy nipples and DT-240s hubs,rides aggressively and does not have wheel problems.

I am 215 LBS and rode a similar wheel set and hated the flex.

Basically a custom wheel set can and should be specifically designed and built by some one familiar with the terrain that you ride and is willing to listen

to your needs and wants and come up with the best compromise. There is no easy way to do this and no generic answer.

The dedicated wheel sets have their place. They are typically loaded with technology. Also bang for the buck you usually get that technology for a very competitive price. As far as budget wheels bang for the buck there are some killer looking wheels on the market. I have no recommendations as I have not ridden any for any length of time.

Yes I know this wheel information is vague. I would love to test dedicated wheelsets and give our feed back when we get them we will post and tell you who would get the most out of any given wheelset.

What about Carbon rims? Again we have not ridden any so have nothing to add. Does it freak me out? YES! would I try them. YES! They offer a lot of promise but to me need to be proven by someone who is not sponsored by the company. I will not throw my money at them. Before I get some comment by a carbon zealot I know that Steve Peat races them Down Hill on the world cup circuit. I don't care. He gets free wheels any time he wants. It only has to make it down the hill one time. In defense of carbon wheels, under Steve Peat aluminium wheels won't hold up either. I would test them if a company sent them to me. Does anybody want to know about carbon rims? If so I will see if I can get set.

Another big Con of carbon wheels is that if they do break it will cost a small fortune to replace. If I destroy a Stan's rim it will cost \$85 to scrap it and \$35 or so to get it rebuilt plus max \$60 for spokes. Those would be some expensive spokes. So total \$180. Do that to a carbon rim! You still need to buy spokes and pay labor plus \$850 for a Edge Composite rim! The edge rims are 450 grams and Stan's Flow rims weigh 470 grams(claimed) If the Edge rims puke do you want to pay \$850 to replace one of them? Will they fail? Who knows? We will see in a few years and at those prices I will want to have them on my bike for a few years.

So there are pro's and cons to factory built and hand built. at this point as long as you maintain either set, check your air pressure in your tires, use adequate air pressure in your tires(protects your rims) you should be able to get good service out of either type.

 **SHARE**    ...

[Translate]

 **Like**  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Build Tips For a 29er Trail Bike Part Two](#)

Comments: [Be the First to Comment](#)

Filed Under: [Other Stuff We Like](#), [Perspective](#)

29er Build Questions Answered: Stem, Bars, Seat posts, and Grips for a trail 29er

29er Build Questions Answered: Stem, Bars, Seat posts, and Grips for a trail 29er

Steve from Winston Salem wrote a build request under the "[Bob Builds Bikes](#)" tab on 29eronline. Here is his question. We have hidden the personal details for his privacy.

Steve bought a Turner Sultan Frame, and a Fox fork with a 15mm QR axle. He rides road bikes but wants to ride mountain bikes. He is interested in aggressive trail riding. The area where he lives has a good technical trail and the North Carolina mountains are close by. He comes from an athletic back ground and also rides motorcycles. At 52 years old he doesn't feel that he will be jumping anything too large. At 6' 4" and 220 pounds and how and where he rides we will have to pay attention to the parts we pick. Lets start with the easy stuff. The stem, handle bar, seat post and grips.

Stem: At Steve's height I would recommend a 90-100 mm stem. If Steve purchased the correct size frame, on a 29er this should work well for him. The Shorter stems make for more precise handling and smooths out the front end as far as side to side movement. A long stem has kind of a break away point. This is hard to explain but I refer to it as wheel flop. When you turn a really long stem to the right or left it flops instead of smoothly transitioning. This is exaggerated with 29er wheels.

In addition to the "Flop factor" The shorter stems bias your weight toward the back of the bike. This is a much more confident descending position. Three things happen here that are debatable negatives.

First is fit. Older 29er geometry was still leaning to the short side as far as top tube length. For instance we felt that the [Ventana El Rey](#) was not suited to a short stem. Also Lenz bikes are still short compared to the seat tube height. For some this works really well so there is obviously exceptions to the short stem rule.

For instance the [Turner Sultan](#) in the size Large frame has a 24.25 inch effective top tube. The Large measures a 19" frame at the seat tube center to top measure. The [Ventana El Rey](#) size Large measures to a 19.5 seat tube. It has a 24.00 top tube. Obviously the same rider is going to need to run a slightly longer stem on the Ventana to get a similar fit. Of course this is not as simple as it sounds as other factors come into play. Like seat post set back, Seat tube angle (higher the post and slacker the angle, the longer the theoretical top tube is). In our case the Sultans geometry really rides well with a shorter stem. In my opinion even the 100mm is not my favorite. I personally ride a 80mm on most bikes even if that means I am a little cramped. The handling is so much better I would rather make the sacrifice in a little comfort, which is also a general and subjective statement, for the quick, precise handling the shorter stem gives.

Second potential negative, Weighting the front wheel: On steep climbs with a tall front end and your weight shifted back, the front end of the bike can become light. Worst case the front end gets so light the front wheel lifts off the ground and you loose control and fall. In the last 5 years that I have been riding and introducing others to 29ers I have only seen this happen to one person and it was his first time ever riding a mountain bike. In addition to that he was using flat pedals. It happened to him on the down stroke. Modern 29er geometry and a little technique eliminates the problem. I can ride the steepest section of local trail and never have a problem with this. 29er wheels are much more sure footed then a 26er. Learn to slide your weight forward in your saddle. Use the nose of the saddle, lower your chest to your bars and pedal away.

Third is leverage.: Just like any lever the longer the lever, in this case your stem, the easier it is to lift an object. In this case your front end. You see this in trials riding. I am still bias to a shorter stem even for this. It comes down to technique. Does the ability to shift your weight back easier with a short stem make up for less leverage? In my opinion I would say yes.

Next topic is handle bars. For aggressive trail riding and 29ers think wide. Think about 27(still not my preference) to about 30 inches. I ride about [27.5" bars](#). I have been riding wide bars(and short stems) for about 15 years now. Wide bars smooth out a 29ers steering. They increase leverage and add stability.

Down sides to wide bars: Fitting between trees. There are a couple of places were I have to lean my bike over stick my bars behind a sapling and lean the bike the opposite way to clear a skinny gap between trees. If you live in an area where clearance becomes a problem you can always cut your bars. I would say that trails this skinny are not very common especially with the new methods of trail building.

Seat post: Should you buy a [set back](#) or a [straight](#)? This is really based on fit. There are not a whole lot of people that anatomically need a set back seat post. I have lately started to prefer the set back posts. It seems that when I line my self up in the traditional fit method, that I develop pains in my hips. It is really too hard to tell you if you should be on a set back or straight

post. If I had to pick I would say start with a straight post. By the law of averages most people will fit this just fine.
The real advice is 1) get professionally fit. 2) listen to your body!
The brand I think is the best is Thomson. They are pretty bomber and spare small parts are readily available. I am running the [Easton EA-70](#) and it seems the bolt on the front of the post is a little awkward and seems a little soft as I have somehow bent both the front and rear bolts.
Also the finish does not seem to hold up. I am really wanting to try the new [2011 Haven](#) parts that were previewed at Sea Otter. I will report on them when they become available. For now the Thomson is the gold standard.
If you need a less expensive seat post the [Sette apx](#) at Price Point actually is very nice for the money. The [Truvative seat posts](#) are decent as well.
To add to seat posts you can run a dropping seat post. As far as fit you can get set backs or straight dropping style seat posts. The brand I ride is a [Crank Brothers Joplin R](#). I would try others but for now I own this one and am not inclined to spend another \$300 on a different one especially since it is not a 29er specific part. It only comes in a 30.9 or 31.8 so if your seat tube diameter is smaller you will need to look at the [Gravity dropper](#) brand.

For aggressive trail riding I think they are great. Not completely necessary as I have ridden the same terrain with out one. However it is really nice to have the option to lower your seat post on the fly without getting off the bike. The lower saddle allows you to lower your center of gravity for cornering. It allows you to get lower and back further on really steep terrain. If you like to bunny hop or scale tall logs, the ability to keep the seat out of the way makes these moves easier. I switch back and forth between a dropping seat post and a standard one.

Grips: Really there is only one option that I feel I can recommend with no hesitation for trail riding. Lock on Grips. ODI, Lizard Skins, Specialized, and others make a large variety to choose from. Our test bikes all run [Oury Lock on grips](#). when they get wet they don't slip. No hair spray or wiring required to keep them from slipping. i would get a spare set of clamp bolts as they strip out fairly easy.

Other then that I could suggest looking at [ESI silicone grips](#). The only real advantage of these is weight. They are super light. They also don't slip when wet but don't last near as long. Also when you are swapping shifters, brakes, dropping post remotes, or handlebars they are harder to remove. Next post we will continue through the rest of our parts.



[Translate]

 Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[29er Build Questions Answered: Stem, Bars, Seat posts, and Grips for a trail 29er](#)

Comments: [7 Comments to Read](#)

Filed Under: [Other Stuff We Like](#), [Perspective](#)

Specialized Stumpjumper Expert 29er Review

Posted by FatBob on June 1, 2010

[Specialized Stumpjumper Expert 29er Review](#)

29eronline has been riding the Stumpjumper for a couple of months now and I finally feel that I have enough data to confidently write a review. Our build report can be found [here](#).

After giving the 2009 version a terrible review I decided that I needed to

spend as much time as possible riding the Stumpjumper. So for the first month it is the only bike I rode. I put the previous experience behind, opened my mind and just rode it. I am glad I did. There is a lot going for this bike so here is the information and educated opinion we have formed.

The first feature I noticed and decided to play with is the BRAIN shock . What does it do? If you want to read the marketing lingo look at the bottom of this review and follow the links. Here is what I felt and a description I came up with. It is part filter and part lock out. It seems to act as a valve choke. When you run the BRAIN shock fully open it acts like a classic Horst link bike. That is plush but not super efficient. It will bob around and occasionally have a floating kind of motion of the ocean feeling. Where I like this is when I am descending really technical terrain and under heavy braking. From this point I slowly worked my way to the firmest setting.

I went against Specialized advice and put a 140mm fork on it and I have to say I had fun. The 130mm travel rear with the BRAIN open felt at home with the long fork . DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME IT DEFINITELY VOIDS YOUR WARRANTY!



Matt R Testing the Stumpjumper
FSR at San-Lee park

Lets go back to the softest setting and set a 120mm fork back on the bike. Especially in technical climbs I felt the rear end of the bike needed a little filtering. Kind of calm it down for the quick pedal snap to get over and through rocky climbs. I ended up settling on 4 clicks from fully soft. it is still really plush in this setting but creates a little bit of resistance to the rear end sagging on every pedal stroke.



From this point the BRAIN got used and abused! I rode it fully firm and started trying to see where the BRAIN kicked off to allow the suspension to do it's job including doing 2-3 foot drops. Very cool. It actually works. At times it felt like I was pedaling a hardtail. I cringed a little when I would hit a

big root and ...nothing just a little click and bump no more. Pedals like a hardtail but still eats up bumps hmmm not finding a draw back on this one.



Now on really rocky sections I was much happier with the BRAIN with less platform on(less hardtail like) and when I knew I had a long smooth ride coming up I wanted the firmest setting that I could get. I really used all the Brain Settings and found myself dialing the firmness per ride I did. This really could be the only mountain bike you own as long as you aren't riding in the extremes.

If you are considering the Specialized Stumpjumper do yourself a favor, ignore the 130mm travel number and think more about what the bike is made for. This is a trail bike in the truest sense of the word. This was illustrated best on yesterdays ride. I rode 8 miles to a trail then rode the trail. The 130mm and slack head angle would tell you this would be miserable. In actuality I was very happy. Why? the Specialized pedals really light. Much lighter then the actual scale reads. I can not explain why as the frame is over 6 pounds and the total bike weight is about 29 LBS as I have it set up now. Every rider that tested it, besides the rider that rode it as the first mountain bike he ever rode, thought that it felt light. One commenter even was worried about the durability it felt so light. I can not explain why but like it.



The Specialized is also a very good handling bike. Again ignore the numbers. It rides switch backs as well as any other bike besides the RIP9 in its trail bike class. The slack angles take a bit to get used to but really don't hold the Specialized back at all when the trail gets tight. It bunny hops well and is easy to get in the air. For some reason I had a hard time staying on my rear wheel for wheelie's but never was bothered on the trail. It really has the playful feel that I love in a trail bike. After riding the slack head tube angle I am a believer. During the course of our testing we made a couple of converts. I now have a hard time switching back to steeper angle bikes.

Climbing the Specialized was very good. The front end is a little tall for some but I was not bothered by it at all. This is easily remedied with either a flat bar or negative rise stem. We run zero rise stems and a 15mm riser Truvativ bar.

Decending the Stumpjumper is great. It is on par with the best trail bikes. Here is where noticeable credit can be given to the low center of gravity and slack head angle. As my confidence built I started riding further and further towards the center of the bike. I found I didnt need to hang off the back of the bike like other bikes we have tested. Compared to other 29ers this is a standout feature of the Stumpjumper that, other then the Niner WFO9, stands apart from other bikes in our test.



Here comes the complicated part. While decending the Stumpjumper was very confident it could be potentially negated on rough trails with the BRAIN set too firmly. While cornering on rooty corners with the BRAIN on I could feel the rear end chatter around the turn kind of like a hardtail.

Not surprising as that is what you are mimicking when you use the BRAIN in the first place. Same corner with the BRAIN soft and the issue is no longer a problem. While the BRAIN is effective and I used it a lot, you will need to find the happy medium or be willing to compromise. The way I see it is that it is nice to be able to pick what and when you will compromise. The BRAIN in the firmest setting seems to do better when there are well spaced hits or smoother trails with larger hits but less of them.

As usual no bike is perfect. Where the Specialized falls short is that the shock seems to be over sprung. Coming through sections where the trail is rutted out, if you dont have the rebound dialed back the suspension would pop you all over the place. Without the right technique some riders actually popped out of the seat on these types of climbs. I rode the bike with the rebound 1 click from fully slow. Still at times I would sink to the bottom of a rut, the suspension would fully compress and pop me, and at times, the rear wheel in the air. The only way I can describe it is if you have 2 springs. 1 spring is tightly coiled with thick steel and the other is loosely coiled with thinner steel. The one with the tighter spring rate will return after being compressed at a faster rate then the loose one. We are dealing with air springs and it seems that similiar rules apply. My suggestion to Specialized is to tune the spring rate a little more linear with the same bottom out.

Here is something cool. When I mentioned this to Specialized PR man Nic Sims he set me up with Mick Andrews, Specialized suspension guru. Evidently they are refining the design and tuning the Stumpjumper. In other words they are not sitting still and saying good enough(and it is truly good enough as it sits) but are always improving their designs. The fact that they would spend the time talking with our little site really makes me rethink the corporate monsters I had envisioned them to be. Here is the deal though if we wait till next years newer supposedly better design we will always be waiting and not riding a sweet bike. There is always a promise of bigger and better but since this bike is so strong as is, I wouldn't necessarily hold back

from buying this year. There is no guarantee that next year will actually be better just different.

Four other things I would like to see. First the ability to run a 140mm fork without voiding the warranty. In Specialized defense this would mean steepening the head angle so it does not ride like a chopper when you add a longer fork. With the longer fork the bottom bracket height would be a little higher which for us east coasters wouldn't hurt. I understand why they wouldn't but it would be nice especially since Rock Shox is offering the Reba in a 130 and 140mm option for 2011.

Second is getting away from an internal head set. From a consumers stand point I worry about the internal types starting to creak. In Specialized defense the creaking we discovered seems to have been from over tightening the headset not the head tube. However we are getting some creaking in other brand bikes and it kind of makes us nervous. Plus the choice of a headset is nice. If an external type starts to act up, worse case scenario it is a \$150.00 fix for a Cane Creek 110 or Chris King Headset. These makers allow the use of a 1.5 lower and a 1 1/8 upper with the press in variety.

Third: The linkage that holds the shock came very loose. It had blue Loctite on the threads from the factory so it is not an over site or a quality control issue. I reapplied some blue Loctite and it has held now for a couple of months. If you buy a Stumpjumper FSR 29er and the rear end feels flexy check your pivots. This frame is plenty stiff.

Lastly our Specialized Stumpjumper paint job started to chip around the disc tabs and the seat tube at the seat post clamp. I am a big anodize fan as it eliminates these sort of problems and saves weight in the process.

So do we like it. Yes there isn't much not to like. Specialized delivered a go anywhere do any thing bike that, short of the extremes, with a couple of parts changes can be almost anything a rider wants it to be.

Helpful Links: [Specialized Stumpjumper 29er Expert Overview](#)

[Brain Brain Washing](#)

[Ben the guy Ed Norton is trying to look like, explains the BRAIN](#)

(**mindbender**: If [Ed Norton](#) looks like Ben does Ben's ex girl friend look like [Salma Hayek](#))

 [SHARE](#)    

[Translate]

 [Like](#)  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Specialized Stumpjumper Expert 29er Review](#)

Comments: [7 Comments to Read](#)

Filed Under: [Frame Reviews](#)

Titus Rockstar At Sea Otter

Titus Rockstar At Sea Otter

I have a little more Sea Otter for you out there. Today we will be showing the Titus Rock Star 29er.

Titus Bikes were approachable and cool guys. Thanks for spending some time showing me the Rock Star.



What do you the reader want to know about this bike and why is it different from the other bikes on the market? First things first. Titus has bumped the travel of this bike from their previous offering the Racer X 29er. Instead of 80mm the Rock Star has 100mm. This makes the Rock Star a bike I want to test. 80mm is too little 100 is within the ball park of what most guy's will get the most out of. Titus designed the Rock Star around a 100mm fork. You can run a 120mm fork with this bike. This is important to me especially with the release of the new Fox 32 Talas 29 fork.



This brings up the point; what is the Titus made for? It is not a race bike. It is **not NOT** a race bike either. It is a bike designed to do what you want it to do all day long. Again we see a company that understands the real strengths of a 29er. So you can get a TALAS for this bike. If you are riding rocky steep terrain on the climbs you can lower the front end to 95mm and climb with the best of them. On the down hills put the TALAS in 120mm mode and the extra height slackens your head angle and raises the bottom Bracket for a more confident technically capable riding position. Versatility. This is becoming more and more important to me when I am looking at bikes to review.



Now when you look at the Titus Rock Star you may think this is an old suspension design. It is a [Horst Link design](#). The style of suspension has been around for a long time. No it is not outdated. This design has been refined for a long time. Shocks have gotten better to really play up the strengths and down play the few negatives. One huge positive is simplicity. This is a relatively simple design that has years of refinement. The Horst link bikes are easy to work on and ride really well when done right.




In the pictures take a look at the head tube of the Titus. It is a tapered head tube with a press in lower bearing. Here are the cool features of this style of tapered head tube. If you have a 100mm front fork with a 1 1/8 steer tube it is an easy swap over to the Titus. Just press in a lower bearing with a reducer. Next thing I am really beginning to appreciate is that if the headset gets creaky on this system replace the bearing and cup assembly not the frame. The press in bearing is the lower bearing because this bearing takes the most load. The top bearing is integrated. It seems this is done to lower the front end of the bike.

Next is the carbon fiber rear end. I am still not 100% sold on Carbon as a material for the average rider. However if you are going to use it this makes more sense to me than a complete bike. Because of the Horst link set up, if you break a piece of the rear end like a chain stay, you can just buy the part of the chain stay you broke. While I am sure it is not cheap, it isn't as bad as replacing a one piece rear end or a front triangle. All this is IF you break it. I am excited to test Titus Bikes' carbon rear end to see what advantages it really offers.

The main triangle is [hydro formed aluminium](#). The Rock Star does come in a [titanium version](#). I know there are some people who are not into titanium on suspension bikes. I have to say I am a sucker for it. I think it is beautiful. I won't kid anyone that any bike will be the last bike I own but if I wanted it to be it could be. Well that is if the industry doesn't out date every standard and make it impossible to get parts that will fit it, or if the rear end holds up as it should.... well let's just keep it because titanium is cool and makes me feel really special. Isn't that enough!

29eronline should be getting a Titus Rock star for review. Follow the [RSS feed](#) for updates on 29eronline testing the Titus Rock Star.

[Translate]

 Like  Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Titus Rockstar At Sea Otter](#)

Comments: [Read the First Comment](#)

Filed Under: [Announcements](#), [Frame Reviews](#)

Tags: [Titus Rock Star](#)

Intense Bikes at Sea Otter and Why We Care.

Posted by FatBob on May 18, 2010

[Intense Bikes at Sea Otter and Why We Care.](#)

Back to posting cool stuff at Sea Otter. We have been testing and compiling video for a couple of other reviews so have been absent from posting.

At Sea Otter I had the privilege to meet [Jeff Steber](#) (pronounced STEEBER. Yes I made the mistake and was kindly corrected). Here is why it was a privilege. How many company owners will come out during race week and spend one on one time to explain a bike to a small website like 29eronline? The crew at [Intense](#) was laid back but was willing to spend time to talk to us and answer our questions. I also met Stickman who was super laid back and a nice guy. Some companies were really snobby and not accommodating so it is always appreciated when a company is cool. Remember, if a company doesn't treat you good to your face how are they going to treat you when you call them for a warranty or tech question?



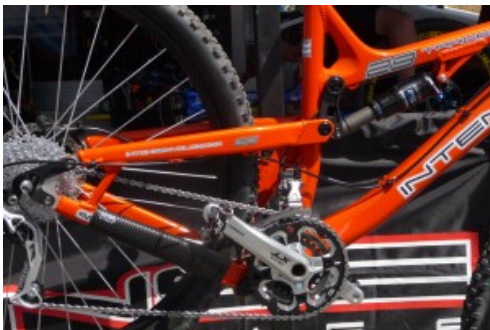
That is not the only reason Intense made a great impression. Their Intense Tracer 29er and prototype 29er down hill bike are impressive. These bikes are made in the USA. These bikes are made in house. These bikes cost about the same as a high end Taiwanese made frame from some small manufacturers that out source their bikes. These bikes are [handmade by people](#) who obviously take a lot of pride in their work.



I have been following this evolution for some time. The first frame Intense made was a [Intense Spider 29er](#). I did not want it because at the time they were using really steep geometry. It was a cool bike otherwise. Intense was also one of the early adopters of full suspension 29ers with the Spider 29er. Then I noticed a couple of pictures floating around of a [5.5 29er prototype](#) which seemed to disappear. Intense brought the concept back with a vengeance! This is by far one of the most technologically advanced and forward thinking bikes out on the market. This is why we are most excited about the Intense Tracer 29er.



Lets start at the head tube. It is a full 1.5 head tube. Why? Besides the obvious strength...**options**. You can run a 1 1/8 steer tube fork using [headset reducers](#). You can use a tapered steer tube fork using a head set designed to adapt and in the future, if any company will sack up, you can use a full 1.5 steer tube fork. this is forward thinking ! Why limit the customer to one component? Also with technology changing and demand increasing, the customer that buy's the Tracer 29er will be able to upgrade with out changing frames. No throw away frames here. These are built to be used for a long time.



Intense does some beautiful craftsmanship. These frames are gorgeous!



Suspension type is a Virtual Pivot Point. Intense licences the VPP technology from Santa Cruz Bikes. It seems to me when Intense Bikes makes an improvement (like redesigned linkages) then miraculously so does Santa Cruz hmmm. The travel of the Tracer is adjustable between 5 and 5.5 inches. Again options. You can run a 140mm fork and have a 140mm travel in the rear and use it as an all mountain bike. Or you can run a 120mm fork, steepening the head angle, and lowering the Bottom Bracket and use it as a all day trail bike.

Moving down the frame. We go to the rear drop outs. Once again Intense thought ahead and didn't pigeon hole the buyer. You can use a 150mm spaced rear end. This wider rear axle allows you to stiffen the rear end of the bike and build a stiffer rear wheel. You can use a Syntace 12x142mm rear end. Information on that [here](#). This is a cool system. Think [Fox 15mm QR](#) for the rear. When installing the rear wheel, you slip it into a notch in the rear drop out, push the axle through like a 15mm QR and spin the axle into a threaded drop. From there you tighten an over sized 12mm QR axle (or bolt on). If I was buying this bike for my personal use this is the option I would choose. Very Good system! It is much more secure than the standard drop outs the industry has been using. Speaking of which, 135mm is the third option. If you are heavily invested in wheels (like 29eronline) you can use the standard 135mm rear wheel.

The Tracer 29er is set up to be run with a [direct mount front dérailleur](#).

The Intense is a hand built beauty that can be set up to suit a huge number of preferences. Versatility. I love seeing this.

[Intense](#) is going to be allowing us to test this bike with our 29eronline kits. We are chomping at the bit and will be filling you in on the details . Watch for our test in the near future. Please don't back out on us Stickman, we have a fragile heart!



[+](#) SHARE [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) ...

[Translate]

[Like](#) [f](#) Be the first of your friends to like this.

Related Posts:

- No Related Posts

[Intense Bikes at Sea Otter and Why We Care.](#)

Comments: [2 Comments to Read](#)

Filed Under: [Announcements](#), [Frame Reviews](#)

Tags: [Intense](#)

[« previous](#) [home](#) [top](#)